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MYTHOLOGY AMONG THE BELLACOOLA AND CARRIER INDIANS

By HARLAN I. SMITH

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THE Bellacoola Indians live in the Fiordway of Canada, about midway of the Pacific Coast, where Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the first white man to cross Canada, reached the sea—that is, about half way between Vancouver and Prince Rupert. Their country is around the head of the inlets about sixty miles in from or east of Queen Pulls and the usual route of the steamers up and down the coast. This inland passage is with few exceptions protected by the outer fringe of islands. The Bellacoola language is one of the Salish linguistic stock. The people are of the typical North Pacific Coast culture, characterized by the extensive use of red cedar and its products, especially salmon, huge houses of split cedar planks with carved house posts, and totem poles, and fearsome snapping canoes dug out of cedar. They were expert carpenters and had a peculiar art, especially in painting and carving, largely of conventionalized animal forms—a valuable contribution to the art of the world. This art may become of great financial value to the manufacturers of this country as well as a magnet capable of exploitation to bring to tourists with money from foreign lands. These Indians had a very highly developed social organization, many dances and rituals, and a complex financial system popularly known as the potlatch.

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The Carrier Indians of Chilcotin, on the other hand, live in the high plateaus of the semi-arid region, perhaps 75 miles northeast of the Bellacoola. They differ from the Bellacoola in language, appearance, and culture perhaps as much as do the Turks from the English. They had a low realistic art, which was largely geometric and pictographic, highly conventionalized and symbolic. Their social organization and financial system also were less highly developed.

B
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From time to time during 1920-1922 inclusive, I have secured from both these peoples data about their use of materials. Part

of these data refer to insects, and may be of interest to entomologists, although my spelling of Indian words is very problematical, because some of the words I can neither hear nor make, and I am unable to record adequately many of those that I can hear. The data here given are preliminary to a complete working over of my notes, but are believed to be nearly complete.

Insects apparently were not so well observed by the Stillaquids as were useful mammals and plants, the stinger of the humble-bee, for instance, being supposed to be in its mouth. Five insects had names, that is, mainly those which were used or which troubled the Indians. Insects were not used for food, and honey was unknown until after the coming of the white man. The head of the gold-fly was used as a pattern in painting designs, the wing of the yellow jacket in sympathetic magic or witchcraft, and "fly spit" was said to be good for sores. They had a story about the humble-bee.

Among the Wishoskin also observation of insects was rather than that of mammals and plants, and they apparently had names for only a few insects, those which troubled them. Ant lore also and the method of taking prey were known. Insects were of no use to the Wishoskin whatever. An Indian was observed of an Indian covering himself with a hooding fly held in the mouth. They employed smudges, fish oil, grass of the cotton-wood, and blankets of cow parsnip with oil to protect themselves from mosquitoes, black flies and no-see-ums, and smoke to protect foods from flies.

The Ant Lion, among the Wishoskin, is called Kinnikinnick. It is said to be common on Wishoskin, but that it was believed that there was no story about it. My informant voluntarily showed me the pits made by the larvae of this insect and, striking ants for the purpose, demonstrated its well-known method of taking its prey.

The grasshopper (Pellopteron), that makes a noise by rubbing its wings together when it flies, was called Kikwa, among the Wishoskin.

"Fly spit," that is the material surrounding a nymph of a spittle insect, also known as a frog hopper (Cercopidae), is said

[illegible]

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A fly which has not bite, perhaps the house fly among the Bellacoola, was called Mamnish, and was said to lay its eggs on fish and fish eggs. The place called Nanamnish was so named because the people thought they saw flies and they said mamnish, but when the supposed flies fell they were seen to be toads.

Among the Ulkatcho, this fly was called Anthus, and was said to lay its eggs on clothes. To keep off flies of all kinds and mosquitoes the daughter of the new parents, Dzoodzem Smutem Skidoo, called Lyem in Ulkatcho, were put in all of the cabachon fish or sea trout oil and the mixture was put on the body. Every food that was cooked was smoked so that flies would keep away from it. They never used as fish bait.

The Gad-fly, (shower up? probably communis G. G. of the family Tabanidae, which is commonly called horsefly, is numerous when the leaves come down to Bella Coola from the interior. Among the Bellacoola it is called Sth lay coil. It is said to lay its eggs in the backs of the cattlers in July, and these hatch into "worms." The ox and cows, being pretty, were used long ago as a pattern for a picture which was painted on the bones. There was no name for the fly.

Among the Ulkatcho, this gad-fly is called Chee ca, and a smaller one is called Chee cho yun, yun signifying small. Once I saw with them a medicine was used to keep off the gad-fly, but no smaller creature than cottonwood gum with oil was used. Apparently for its own amusement, my Ulkatcho Indian informant held up and down Bee by the abdomen inside his mouth and made it buzz.

The black and white biting fly, horse fly (Cymphoromyia sp.?) apparently considered as one, are called Skilgits and in Bellacoola. They are called Chee cho yun in Ulkatcho yun signifying small.

The black fly, Simuliidae, among the Bellacoola is called Chem cum quit ch or ch hell.

Among the Ulkatcho it is called Wimchu, while Tah is the name of black fly, mosquitoes, and no-see-ums. All these were kept off with a smoke smudge made with a few of any kind of wood on which are put such things as grass, wet, or rotten wood,

or grass. Black flies were sometimes kept off by putting oil of [illegible] or tweed on the face and hands. Cottonweed grass with oil was also used for this purpose.

The Na-ass-ess among the Dellarondo is called Shigh or el ka.

Among the Ulkavicks the na-ass-ess is called Whitkard and it is said that the bite of this little fly causes swelling and sickness. It was kept off in the same manner as the black fly.

Mosquitoes, Culicidae, among the Dellarondo, were called Pikie.

Among the Ulkavicks they were kept off with smoke in the same manner as the black fly, and with liniments of the cow parsnip in oil in the same manner as flies. It is not clear if the grass of the cottonweed was or was not used for this purpose, as it was so long off season.

Among the Ulkavicks "worms" were not used as fish bait.

Victoria Memorial Museum,
Ottawa, Canada.